Punishment Beyond the Deportee: The Collateral Consequences of Deportation

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Abstract: Deportations from the United States reached record highs in the aftermath of the Great Recession (2007-2009). At the peak of this wave of deportations, over 400,000 people were deported from the United States – as many in one year as in the entire decade of the 1980s. The majority of these deportees have U.S. citizen family members, nearly all of whom continue to live in the United States. Over 90% of these deportees are men, and nearly all are sent to Latin America, creating gendered and raced consequences for specific communities. This paper draws from interviews with 27 people from California who experienced the deportation of a family member to provide insight into the effects of deportation on these families. This paper builds on scholarship on the collateral consequences of incarceration to enhance our understanding of the collateral consequences of deportation. The findings reveal that family members face short, medium, and long term consequences in the aftermath of a deportation and that many adolescents are forced to make an abrupt transition to adulthood when one or both of their parents is deported.

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There are about 22 million non-citizens living in the United States,[1] about 11 million of them without documentation. Any non-citizen is at risk for deportation, which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) terms removal, although the risk is higher for the undocumented, for men, for low-income people, and for blacks and Latinxs (Golash-Boza 2015). Deportations from the United States are at a historic high: in the 20 years between 1997 and 2016, 5.7 million people were deported from this country, over twice the sum total of all deportations in the nation's history prior to 1997.[2]

Although the individual risk for deportation is low, many non-citizens live in fear of deportation, as the consequences can be devastating – not only for the deportee, but also for their loved ones. Family members may witness the apprehension that leads to deportation, be unable to contact a detained family member, or be emotionally scarred by visiting a detainee in a detention center (Koball et al 2105). When a deported family member had been a breadwinner, his or her removal causes financial stress, and families often face challenges meeting their basic needs (Brabeck, Lykes, and Hunter 2014; Dreby 2012; Chaudry 2011; Koball et al 2015). Finally, families have to make stressful decisions about how and whether they will reconfigure once their family member is deported (Boehm 2016; Zayas 2015).

Megan Comfort (2007) references "punishment beyond the legal offender" to describe the experiences of families of incarcerated people. In a similar fashion, I argue that the family members of deported people also experience punishment. The harms deportation inflicts on family members resemble closely the harms inflicted on the families of incarcerated persons (Christian 2005; Comfort 2007; Woldoff and Washington 2008; Dallaire and Wilson 2009; Wildeman 2009; Phillips and Zhao 2010; Bowman and Travis 2011; Grieb et al 2014). This is largely because the mechanisms that lead to deportation are either exactly or practically the same as those that lead to incarceration. Both incarceration and deportation begin with an arrest. Both involve human containment. Here the experience diverges, as an incarcerated person is either released back to his or her family or dies in prison, while a deported person either experiences permanent exile or returns – legally or illegally – to his or her family in the United States.

The Context of Mass Deportation

In the aftermath of 9/11, enforcement of immigration law through removals shifted toward the interior, which means that the enormous increase in deportations largely involved residents as opposed to recent border crossers. Data from the Migration Policy Institute reveal that between 2003 and 2013,

[1] https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/acsbr12-06.pdf
[2] http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics

648,000 people who had lived in the United States for at least three years were apprehended and deported. One-third of these people (216,000) had lived in the United States for at least ten years.[3]

Data from Immigration and Customs Enforcement reveal that over the past decade, ICE has carried out 1,558,859 interior removals and 1,786,187 border removals. Whereas a migrant removed from the border may never reunite with family members in the United States, a migrant removed from the interior is often torn from family members in the United States. Amuedo-Dorantes, Pozo, and Puttitanun (2015) surveyed 25,000 Central Americans who had been deported between 2008 and 2013. They found that 82% were deported from the interior of the United States, and 18% of them had children younger than five in the United States. In a survey of 1,000 Mexican deportees, Slack *et a*l (2015) found that their average length of stay in the United States had been nine years, and 51% had U.S. citizen relatives. Another survey with 132 Latino immigrant families found that almost half of the sample (including both undocumented and documented parents) experienced the detention or deportation of a family member (Brabeck and Xu 2010). The quantitative data on the effects of deportations on families is piecemeal yet all points in the same direction – large numbers of family members are left behind in the aftermath of interior removals.

Over the past decade: 91% of removals have been men and 91% are from four countries: Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.[4] In 2011, 98% of deportees were from the Americas—only 5,060 people were deported to Asia; 3,131 to Europe; and 1,602 to Africa (DHS 2011 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics). Mass deportation is, thus, “gendered racial removal” (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013) and its collateral consequences are likewise gendered and raced.

The Collateral Consequences of Deportation

In *Deported* (2015), I argued that migration scholars need to consider how the coercive arm of the state operates in a neoliberal context in order to understand deportations. Here, I expand on that argument by making clearer the connections between incarceration and deportation. Similar to the family members of incarcerated people, family members of deportees experience punishment when their loved one is taken away. Moreover, the criminal justice apparatus and the immigration law enforcement apparatus are barely distinguishable from one another and rely on the same tools, strategies, and agencies

[3] http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change

[4] http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deportation-and-discretion-reviewing-record-and-options-change

A qualitative study of the effects of detention and deportation on family members by Heather Koball and colleagues (2015) revealed that the harms associated with deportation begin with arrest. The process that leads to deportation originates with an apprehension by law enforcement agents – either Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or criminal law enforcement authorities – usually the local police. In many cases, people are arrested while driving. If their family members are in the car, they experience stress at having to witness the arrest. Arrests at home are also stressful to all involved. Home raids often involve large numbers of armed officers demanding entrance and engaging in intimidating tactics. These raids also frequently happen very early in the morning, adding to the confusion and stress families face (Hayoun 2017; Golash-Boza 2012; 2015).

After arrest, law enforcement agents take the detainee either to a local jail or an immigration detention facility. Koball et al (2015) found that family members often had difficulty locating their family members subsequent to their arrest, and that this caused additional distress. Those families who were able to locate their family members often were unable to visit them due to distance, visiting hours that conflict with work or other obligations, or their own unauthorized status. These experiences compound the initial harm caused by their family member's arrest.

Children whose parents are deported can face multiple traumas – they may witness the forcible removal of their parent, lose one or both of their caregivers, and abruptly have to change their place of residence (Brabeck, Lykes, and Hunter 2014). Joanna Dreby (2012: 838) describes the loss of a father from the household as rendering mothers "suddenly single." Parents in this situation are often unable to communicate effectively with their children to explain to them that their other parent has not abandoned them yet will not be able to come home. In addition to the emotional toll, the loss of a family member often has significant and immediate financial repercussions. Slack *et al* (2015) found that 42% of study participants had been the sole economic provider for their households. Such deportations can render a family food and housing insecure (Dreby 2012; Chaudry 2011; Koball et al 2015).

When one parent is deported, the family decides if they will relocate to the parents' country of origin, remain separated, or work towards reunification. There are many barriers – some of them insurmountable – to legal entry subsequent to deportation (Boehm 2016). Some families thus attempt to save thousands of dollars for an illegal re-entry. Others decide to relocate to the parents' country of origin. Family reunification in the country of origin may not be preferable; a study by Zayas and colleagues (2015) revealed that those children who relocated to Mexico to rejoin their parents had higher instances of depressive symptoms than those who stayed behind.

Many deportees return to a place of war and violence (Brabeck, Lykes, and Hunter 2011). Family members in the United States thus must worry about the safety of their deported relatives. Deportees sent to Latin America often fear extortion and kidnapping, as local gang members who know they have family members in the United States may presume they will have access to cash for ransom or extortion payments (Golash-Boza 2015).

Researchers are only beginning to understand the effects of immigration law enforcement on families in the United States. Small-scale quantitative studies have documented that these effects are widespread (Brabeck and Xu 2010) and that there are mental health consequences to the deportation of a family member (Allen, Cisneros, and Tellez 2015). Studies by psychologists have revealed elevated levels of distress among children who have experienced parental deportation (Zayas et al 2015). Policy reports have outlined the emotional trauma and financial difficulties families face (Chaudry 2011; Koball et al 2015). There has been relatively little qualitative sociological analysis of the effects of deportation on those who remain in the United States. One important exception is Joanna Dreby's (2012) work, where 16 of the respondents in her larger study on legal status had experienced the deportation of a family member. Dreby (2012) found that mothers who became "suddenly single" (838) faced significant financial and emotional challenges. This paper builds on this nascent area of research and explores the question of how family members are affected by the deportation of a loved one in the short, medium, and long term as well as how the collateral consequences of deportation are similar to or different to the collateral consequences of incarceration.

Research Design, Methods, and Case Selection

To gain an understanding of how deportation affects families in the United States, we conducted an interview-based study of people who had experienced the loss of a family member to deportation. The research team consisted of the author of this paper and their graduate student. We conducted 27 semi-structured interviews with people in the Central Valley of California who lost a household member to deportation. This included siblings and other relatives as well as children or partners of deportees. The criteria for inclusion was that the family member lived with them at the time they were apprehended. These interviews ranged in length from 15 to 85 minutes. For many interviewees, the topic was highly emotional. When interviewees became visibly upset, we did not probe extensively, as we wanted to avoid causing emotional harm to the participants. For this reason, some of the interviews are relatively short. Other interviews, however, were comfortable speaking at length and several of the interviews are over an hour long.

These interviews were conducted between 2013 and 2018. The extended time span for these interviews is due largely to the difficulty finding people

who had experienced the deportation of a family member. Even as deportation figures soar, it can be challenging to find the family members of deportees, and even more difficult to find people willing to revisit this painful event.

We drew from our connections in Merced County to find potential interviewees. According to Immigration and Customs Enforcement data, 388,986 people were deported through the Secure Communities Program from its initiation in 2008 until its end in 2013. This program began in 2010 in Merced County, and a total of 999 people were deported from Merced County through Secure Communities. We drew from our community networks to find the family members of deported residents of Merced. This was difficult in part because Merced County has extremely limited resources for undocumented immigrants. While the presence of a legal clinic might have provided a useful source of potential interviewees, the use of our networks means that our sample is not biased towards people seeking out services. Instead, our sample includes a broad range of people, many of whom had no contact with any social service agency in the aftermath of the deportation of their family members. Every interviewee received a $30 Target gift card to compensate them for their time. When the interviews occurred in coffee shops, we offered to purchase coffee for the interviewee, although few accepted this offer.

Our second source for potential interviewees included referrals from students in our classes at the University of California, Merced. We asked students in our classes if they knew anyone who qualified for the study. Students received extra credit for referring people to this study. Our sample thus includes a mix of university students from all over California as well as local residents from the Central Valley of California. Many of the students we interviewed who had family members who had been deported were from Los Angeles. This is not surprising as Los Angeles County had the highest number of deportations under Secure Communities – with 35,024 from the program’s initiation in 2009 through the last available data in 2013. The interviews were conducted in an office on campus, at local coffee shops, or in private homes, according to the interviewee’s preference.

Findings

The findings make it clear that the deportation of a family member can have significant short, medium, and long term effects. The act of deportation itself can be violent and/or traumatic. The effects of deportation on family members are felt immediately upon the arrest of the family member facing deportation, especially when the arrest happens in front of the family member. There are also effects in the aftermath of this arrest, as families need to adjust to their new household and financial situation, and over the long term as families must figure out whether and how they will reconfigure.

These collateral consequences share many similarities with how family members are affected by incarceration.

The collateral consequences of deportation and incarceration are similar because the deportation machine is in many ways the same apparatus as the criminal justice apparatus for deportations.[5] Similar to incarceration, deportations begin with an apprehension – the person who will eventually be deported must first be apprehended by a law enforcement agent. In 2016, 65,332 apprehended by ICE were removed. Over three-quarters of these people were first apprehended by police officers and then handed over to ICE agents. Only 20 percent of these people – about 13,000 – were directly arrested by ICE agents in home or worksite raids.[6] For most deportees, then, deportations begin in exactly the same fashion as incarceration – with an arrest by local law enforcement.

When U.S. citizens are arrested by local law enforcement and prosecuted for criminal offenses, they eventually are either released, given a court date, and/or sentenced for a crime. Families of people apprehended by or turned over to ICE face more uncertainty. In some cases, authorities apprehend an undocumented migrant and deport him or her to Mexico days later.[7] In other cases, there may be potential avenues for relief from deportation and family members may scramble to find legal help to avoid deportation. Even when deportation is assured, family members are not told when the deportation will happen, and some people spend months or even years in detention waiting to be deported (Golash-Boza 2015). Once a person is deported, he or she must decide whether or not to return to the United States illegally. An illegal return is challenging and expensive, yet it is a more frequent occurrence than a successful prison break. A consideration of how families respond to a deportation will help us to tease out these parallels and divergences between deportation and incarceration.

Arrest and Detention: Stressful, Criminalizing, and Dehumanizing

The first step in the deportation pipeline is arrest – either by ICE or local police. Witnessing an arrest by ICE or any other federal or local law enforcement agent event is stressful for family members. After arrest, the person facing deportation is taken either to jail or to a detention center. Family members described this process as criminalizing and dehumanizing.

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[5] This may only apply to deportations initiated by ICE, as Customs and Border Patrol has distinct procedures and mandates.

[6] "ICE Immigration Raids: A Primer" TRACImmigration. Online at: http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/459/

[7] In my research, I have only come across people deported to Mexico from one day to the next. Deportations to other countries usually take weeks or even months.

In most cases, the initial apprehension that leads to deportation is made by a local law enforcement agent. When this arrest occurs in front of family members, the event can be traumatizing, and the family members often feel helpless and vulnerable in the face of law enforcement.

Joana, for example, described the events surrounding her brother's arrest, and explained that she felt the whole family was criminalized. Joana is a student at the University of California, Merced. Her parents have a small business making clothes near their home in a low-income area in South Central Los Angeles. Joana was born in the United States, but her brother was born in Mexico and was not a legal resident or U.S. citizen. Her family was just getting ready for bed when the police showed up at the house looking for her brother, who was suspected of a violent crime.

> **Joana**: We were pulled out like animals. I think that was what hurt me the most. We walked out barefoot, and my dad with his underwear, because they didn't even let him put on anything…. There were seven cops lined up, and they expected us to pass through there with our hands up and half naked barefoot walking downstairs with their guns pointed at us….. I remember everyone trying to look, and they were just saying some words that made it seem like we were a house full of criminals.

The large number of police officers induced fear and enhanced the sense of criminalization and dehumanization. It also enhanced Joana's sense of vulnerability and rightlessness, as she explained:

> **Joana:** They didn't even explain to us what was going on. They didn't even have a warrant or anything. I don't even know why we even let them in now that I think about it now that I'm older. We didn't have to let them in. They had a cause, but they can't just come in like that. I felt so stupid, so uneducated, so freaking vulnerable to anything they could do. We just don't know our rights.

Even when you know your rights, it can be extremely difficult to insist on them when faced with several armed uniformed law enforcement agents. This is exacerbated when the officers are aggressive. Agustina explained that when her home was raided by police officers looking for her brother, "there were guns everywhere" and the officers "flipped everything over." Even though she was not a suspect, they threw her on the floor and pointed a gun at her.

Diana, who works for a trucking company in a small town, described a similar situation when her aunt was arrested on drug charges, which led to her aunt being deported. Diana was living with her aunt and uncle in a small town in the Central Valley of California. Her aunt and uncle were involved in a drug

ring, which the police discovered through an investigation. When the police came to arrest her aunt, her uncle was out of the house, but Diana was there with her aunt and the children. Diana explained: “The house was surrounded by cops.” Since Diana was not the children’s legal guardian, when the police arrested her aunt, they called Child Protective Services to come and take the children.

The most common form of arrest was by a police officer, and home raids such as Joana and Diana described were not uncommon. Other interviewees’ relatives were arrested by ICE agents. Julissa, also a student at UC Merced, was in middle school when her father was arrested and deported. She explained that ICE did not come inside her house, but the agents were waiting outside and arrested her father outside their family home in Fresno.

> **Julissa**: We were going to school, and we were pulling out of the driveway, and then there was this tan SUV. And they blocked the driveway. And then these two people came out. They knocked on the window, and they showed their badges; they’re like, “Oh, we’re from ICE.” That’s when they took him.

Children who witness a parent’s arrest are more likely to have emotional difficulties, anxiety, and depression, and are at an elevated risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (Dallaire and Wilson 2009; Phillips and Zhao 2010) compared to those with incarcerated parents who do not witness the arrest. The findings here indicate that this can also be extended to the arrest of any loved one from the home. Witnessing the removal of a loved one from the home or on the streets can be traumatic. When the arrest itself is violent, this trauma can be exacerbated. The criminalization does not stop there. After arrest, detainees are taken to jail, prison, or a detention center. Family members find it difficult to see their loved ones behind bars.

Laura and her sister were born in San Jose, California. They lived with their parents, who both were from Jalisco, Mexico. Laura’s dad worked in construction and her mother worked in a deli.
Laura’s mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to stop working when Laura was ten years old. She was in and out of treatment but passed away when Laura was 13. Laura’s father found it difficult to deal with the grief from his wife passing away and having to raise two teenagers. He decided to take his family to the Central Valley. He found work in an almond farm in Chowchilla, a small town with 18,000 residents, a third of whom live in the two state prisons in town.

When Laura was finishing up the tenth grade in Chowchilla, her father was arrested. He had just purchased a second-hand car and was driving it without license plates or a registration. When the officer pulled him over, he discovered her father had been drinking. The officer arrested her father and

took him to Madera County Jail. Laura went to visit him in jail. Near tears, Laura explained: “The first time it was hard. … You see them through a glass – He’s not a bad person and that just makes him look like a criminal.”

Other interviewees also found the glass barrier difficult. Alfonso described going to see his father in Madera County Jail:

> **Alfonso:** It was kind of sad. He was on the other side. I couldn’t touch him, couldn’t hug him.… They had the glass wall and you had to pick that phone up and that was the closest you were going to get to him.

Alfonso was very close to his father, as they spent a lot of time together prior to his arrest. Alfonso’s father was born in Mexico but had recently applied for legalization when FBI agents came to his home and arrested him for identity theft because he was using another person’s social security card to work. Alfonso was 13 at the time. Alfonso became visibly distressed when talking about his father’s ordeal. After his father’s arrest, Alfonso became depressed and began to drink alcohol at a very young age.

It was important for the interviewees to be able to visit, and especially to touch their family members behind bars. In some cases, they were only able to see them behind a glass bar. Joana was able to see her brother in L.A. County jail, in a state prison, and in a detention center. When he was in Delano, which is only accessible via car from Los Angeles, she had to spend $80 to get there, but she was able to hug her brother. She explained: “I actually got to hug him. I hadn't hugged him for three years.” Nevertheless, it was hard for Joana to see her brother behind bars. This was compounded by her parents’ distress. Her mother worried constantly about her brother, who had just turned 18, being sent to a men’s prison. Joana vividly remembered seeing her father break down in tears.

> **Joana:** I saw [my dad] cry for the first time. … I do remember him crying for the first time, and I was just like, "My dad's crying." … I was like, "That's terrible. You never want to see your son in a prison."

Family members expressed concern about what might happen to their loved ones behind bars, where they did not think their family members were safe. Prison and detention center rules also posed a problem for interviewees. Joana described going to see her brother in a detention center in central California and ultimately being denied entry.

> **Joana**: It's a five-hour drive and then a two-hour wait. Oh, man, I hated them so much.… I remember I was so excited. My mom told me…I was gonna see my brother, and I hadn't seen him for a year, so I was very excited.… We got there early so there wouldn't be a line, and

> so I go through the whole process, and at the end they just tell me I can't go [in].... It was one of the cruelest things ever.

Joana doesn't explain the reason she was given for being barred. Detention centers, jails, and prisons often have dress codes and other rules that may be difficult to anticipate. There also could have been a lockdown – meaning no visitors were accepted for a period of time. When a person is arrested and detained, they experience a sense of rightlessness, and this experience spreads to their family members when they attempt to make contact with their loved ones behind bars. Studies on the impact of imprisonment on family members find that limitations on visitation times, and long-distance travel imperils family relationships (Woldoff and Washington 2008; Christian 2005). The findings here make it clear that this is also true for people with family members in detention.

The Stress of Removal: Finances, Family Structure, and Abrupt Transition to Adulthood

The loss of an adult from a household can be traumatic. Some respondents' families had to move to less expensive housing. Some of the interviewees were teenagers when their single parents were deported, and they had to quickly take on adult roles. In many cases, teenage youths found themselves in charge of their younger siblings. When adolescents' parents are deported, they often are forced to make an abrupt transition to adulthood – ranging from taking on some adult roles to becoming fully independent from one day to the next.

When Laura's father was arrested, Laura was 16 but her sister had just turned eighteen. Thus, Laura's father was able to authorize her sister as her guardian. They survived on Laura's income from her part-time job for two months until their extended family decided they should move in with a family member in San Jose, a city a couple of hours from the small town where they had been living.

> **Laura:** The day after my sister turned 18, that's when my dad got arrested. I guess technically she was allowed to take care of me because he notarized a letter saying that she would be my guardian until I was of legal age. We lived by ourselves for two months. My sister was 18 and I was 16. We were there by ourselves and I was the only one working. It was hard. I was 16 with a part-time job. How was I supposed to pay rent? We managed to do it for two months. … That's when he got deported. We had to figure out where we were gonna go. We moved with one of my mom's nieces back in San Jose. That's how we ended up moving back to San Jose.

Laura and her sister continued to live in the house where they had lived with their father for the duration of his deportation proceedings. Once he was

deported to Mexico, and it was clear he was not going to come back, their family members in San Jose took them in. Like the women Joana Dreby (2012: 838) describes as "suddenly single," deportees' children can become "abruptly adults," as Laura and her sister did. Fortunately for Laura and her sister, her father's sister stepped in and took them into their home.

Jay and his sister, Sandra, were in a similar situation. Jay was 17 and Sandra was 18 when their mother was deported. When their mother was arrested, Jay, Sandra, and their mother were living in his mother's boyfriend's home in a small town in the Central Valley. Their mother's boyfriend did not tell them to leave when their mother was arrested, but when he got a new girlfriend shortly after their mother was arrested, they felt unwelcome. Jay and Sandra moved in with friends until they saved enough money for an apartment.

> **Sandra**: I had to start working – I had to work two jobs. I would work from 8:00am to 4:30pm and then 5:00pm to 11 or 12. When they took my mom, [at] first, we didn't live in our own place yet. We would just stay with friends. We didn't really have money until we started really working. Then we finally got our first place.

Jay and Sandra had to abruptly transition to adulthood to take care of each other. At the time of the interview, Sandra was working in a car dealership, and Jay was working in a warehouse trying to save $10,000 so that they could bring their mother back illegally.

Samantha's brother Joe also became responsible for his 12-year-old sister when his parents were deported. Joe and Samantha grew up in a small town in the Central Valley, where their parents worked in a tomato plant. Their parents were both deported to Mexico in 2006. Initially, they went to Mexico with their parents. However, Joe was unable to enroll in high school in Mexico, as he had never studied there before, and thus decided to return to California to live with his cousins. Samantha stayed in Mexico for a year but found life in Mexico very difficult. Her parents decided she could return to California and live with her brother, who was 16 at the time, and staying with cousins. Back in California, life was not much better for Samantha.

> **Samantha**: I actually was pretty depressed for maybe a year or two. I would just stay locked up in my room most of the time. [Joe] would have to drag me out just to be in the living room or stuff like that. But it was really hard for me.

When Joe finished high school, the two teenagers moved out on their own. Making this transition to adulthood on their own has been difficult. Joe and Samantha would like to pursue higher education but find it difficult without their parents' financial and emotional support.

As Joe and Samantha's case suggests, family members of deportees can choose to relocate to the country where their deported family member lives. This is not a common solution, but when it happens it has significant emotional and financial cost. Of course, this is not an option for incarcerated family members – although some families relocate closer to prisons to be able to visit their family member (Christian 2005).

Roberto's aunt, for example, had four children when she was deported. His aunt and uncle decided that the two youngest children – aged one and 11 - would go with their mother as the father did not think he could take care of his young daughters in the United States alone. And, when their oldest daughter graduated from high school, she also went to Mexico so that she could help her mother with her younger siblings. Roberto explained how stressful that was for his cousin.

> **Roberto**: She could have gone to college, but she didn't. My cousin had no choice but to go back to Mexico and help her mom out. Because her mom really was – she was lost. She came to the United States when she was 14. To go back to Mexico when she's 32 years old, it's such a difference.

Roberto's cousin had to move to Mexico at the age of 11, with the expectation that she would help her mother with this difficult transition. This is yet another example of a young person being forced into adult roles due to a deportation. When a parent is deported, the family faces stressful decisions. Regardless of their choices, life is not the same after deportation.

When the primary breadwinner is deported, the family's lifestyle often changes dramatically. For example, both of Alfonso's parents were working, and they had recently purchased a home when his father was arrested.

> **Alfonso**: We were living the good life. We had a house, we had it going on, and we had it taken it away. I wasn't ready for any of it.

After her husband's deportation, with one minimum-wage income, Alfonso's mother was not able to pay the mortgage. They had to sell the house and move into an apartment. The stability they had achieved with two incomes was not sustainable with just one income. The wealth they had accumulated quickly dissipated as they depleted their resources adjusting to their new lifestyle.

Even if a family does not relocate, the financial hardship may be significant. Jocelyn's parents worked in a garment factory near their home in Korea Town. When Jocelyn's father was deported to Mexico, her mother took on a second job to pay the rent on their home. They considered moving to a smaller place, but were not sure they could find somewhere more affordable. Tears

streamed down Jocelyn's face as she explained that she felt terrible going to college instead of working to provide financial support for her family. The deportation of Jocelyn's father has put a considerable damper on her ability to take full advantage of her college years – primarily due to the guilt she feels for having left her mother in Los Angeles.

Ivonne was only nine when her father was deported, so her brother is the one who took on financial responsibilities in the aftermath. Ivonne's parents were both working as farm laborers in a field about an hour from their home in the Central Valley of California. Her father was arrested at an ICE checkpoint on his way to work. Her mother was consequently fearful of also being arrested on her way to work and had to find a different job to support Ivonne and her six siblings. Ivonne's brother dropped out of school and began working, but it was still financially difficult, as Ivonne explained:

> **Ivonne**: We struggled a lot financially because it was only my mom and then I had an older brother, he was working, but he and my mom were the only ones working. And they had to buy food, rent, pay all the bills, and it was hard because we were all in school – most of my siblings and I, so it was really difficult.

Families often struggled financially after a deportation. In some cases, they were unable to meet basic needs. Victor, who also is from a small town in the Central Valley, mentioned food shortages when asked about the challenges he faced when his father was deported.

> **Victor**: Not a lot of food. … A lot of used clothes, second hand. It kind of affected us at school too because people would bully [us]. They'd see [us] wearing some crappy shoes. … The food, you have the same food [all the time], you know, dried beans, tortillas, corn, and peaches. Because all my family worked in the fields, so they would give us peaches and just agricultural stuff.

Like many of the interviewees in this study, Victor lived in the heart of an agricultural region where neighbors often give one another leftovers from abundant harvests. Having to rely on the goodwill of neighbors to avoid going hungry can be humiliating. Jay and Sandra also mentioned not having enough money for food and relying on donations.

> **Jay**: I remember one time, we were pretty low on food, and we didn't really have much money, one of their friends brought by like a box of Cup of Noodles. That was cool and helped us get through. Yeah, it got really bad several times.

Nearly all of these families were on the brink of poverty at the time of the deportation, with the parents working in minimum-wage jobs. The

deportation of a wage-earner easily pushed the families over the edge into severe poverty. The families had to make difficult choices to survive, often relying on teenage children to make an abrupt transition to adulthood by joining the labor force and taking charge of younger siblings.

These findings parallel those of studies of family members of incarcerated people, as these families often face housing instability and poverty (Clear 2009; Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, and Mincy 2009; Wildeman 2014). One study also found that children may bear new responsibilities as well—from caring for younger siblings to housework to earning money (Foster and Hagan 2009) – similar to the finding here that adolescents often become abruptly adults.

Post-deportation: Moving Forward

When a family member is incarcerated, in some cases, they are able to return home after their incarceration to an intact family. When a family member is deported, they sometimes are able to return to the United States – usually illegally – and must live in the shadows for fear of detection by law enforcement. In other cases, the family member continues to live in their country of birth, and the family makes decisions about how much they want to remain in contact.

Many of the family members of the people we interviewed were deported to places where life is difficult. Nearly all were deported to Mexico, but Helen's stepfather was deported to Yemen. Due to the famine and civil war in Yemen, Helen's family has been unable to visit him since his deportation. Due to the distance from the United States, an illegal return is nearly impossible. Those family members who were deported to Mexico had to worry about the possibility of being kidnapped or extorted – in addition to living in poverty. Agustina's brother, for example, was kidnapped because local gang members heard he had family members living in the United States. Agustina's family ultimately paid $1,000 for his release.

Aside from violence and fear, it is hard for people to know that their family lives in circumstances of severe deprivation. Laura, for example, was distressed when she saw where her father lives in Mexico, in a wooden house with a dirt floor.

> **Laura:** What hurts me when I go over there [to Mexico is] that I see that he doesn't live – we never lived – we were always low income here and everything. We never lived anywhere fancy or anything big … but over there it's even worse. Over there, they're really in poverty and the lowest class. To me, it hurts me to see that … and I wish I could help them more.

Laura struggled to find the words to describe the pain she feels when she sees her father living in poverty. They were never well-off in the United States, but they always had modern comforts such as furniture, a refrigerator, and an oven. In contrast, her father's house in Mexico lacks these modern amenities. It is difficult for her to see her father living in poverty, and to know that she is unable to help him. These feelings are compounded by the guilt she feels for studying at university instead of working and sending money to her father.

Roberto also expressed sorrow at seeing how his aunt and cousins live in third world conditions in Mexico.

> **Roberto**: They don't have running water. They don't have all the necessities that we have here. The house is small. It's made out of adobe. The rest room's outside.

Roberto's aunt and cousins lived in their own home in southern California prior to his aunt's deportation. Roberto grew up in the same household as his cousins and it seemed like they were all on track to upward mobility until his aunt's application for legalization was denied and she was deported to Mexico. Although it had seemed that Roberto and his cousins were on the same track, Roberto is in college, yet none of his cousins have been able to enroll in college.

The guilt over a family member's deportation can be paralyzing. At the same time, some people feel more motivated to move forward after the deportation of a family member. Helen, a student at UC Merced, said that her stepfather's deportation made her realize she had to get her life together. Seeing her mother struggle once her husband was deported, Helen recognized she needed to be financially independent. Ivonne said that her father's deportation also pushed her to work harder at school. Similarly, Jocelyn said, "I feel like now there's more weight on me... I have to graduate. I have to go to grad school or law school. I have to go on."

Family members vulnerable to deportation themselves sometimes change their habits to avoid risk of deportation. For example, Mariana, an undocumented migrant who lives in a small town in California, explained that she limits the amount of time that she spends in the car since her brother was deported. Instead of doing weekly shopping in the next town over, she goes every two weeks.

Many of the interviewees' family members in this study have returned to the United States illegally. This cost their families thousands of dollars to pay a *coyote*. When they return, however, their fear of deportation is extremely high, and they do whatever they can to stay under the radar. Diana's aunt,

for example, came back because she couldn't bear to bring her kids up in poverty in Mexico. Back in California, she is extremely cautious.

> **Diana**: The kids are traumatized. ... They are afraid to drive. She even has the kids in school with a different phone number, different emergency contacts with different numbers … The kids don't even call their dad by his name. They call him by another name that's not his, and the kids don't know that's not their dad's name. … She tells us "don't ever tell them our real names."

Such extreme precautions likely take a toll. Deportations dramatically alter a family's life and can have serious implications for the family members of deportees. Children who rejoin their family members in Mexico see their dreams of attending college evaporate. Children who remain in the United States and manage to embark on a path towards upward mobility are wracked by guilt, knowing their parent lives in conditions of deprivation. And deportees who return live in constant fear of re-arrest and another deportation.

When prisoners return home, they face considerable barriers to successful reintegration into society including lack of financial resources, difficulty accessing housing, and barriers to employment (Bowman and Travis 2012; Miller 2014; Western 2018). These barriers make it difficult for many formerly incarcerated people to contribute financially and even emotionally to their families. Previously deported people face similar obstacles, with the added barrier of lack of legal status if they return illegally to the United States or the lack of economic opportunities if they remain in their country of birth. In both cases, deportation and incarceration have long-term effects on their ability to contribute financially to their families – who often desperately need their assistance.

Discussion and Conclusion

Family members of deportees pay a significant price when their loved one is deported. The process of deportation is itself criminalizing, which negatively affects family members who must bear witness to their loved ones facing the brute force of the state. The loss of a breadwinner can cause a financial crisis in the household. And, families are often permanently torn apart. These collateral consequences of deportation disproportionately affect the most vulnerable members of our society. Poor or working-class Latino men are the most common targets of deportation. The family members affected by deportation and incarceration also belong to marginalized and vulnerable groups: racial and ethnic minorities, women and children, and poor and working-class people. These collateral consequences thus exacerbate existing race and gender inequalities.

Deportation practices and laws, as written, do not specify that only some people will be targeted. Nevertheless, only certain communities are targeted by these punitive and harsh tactics. The primary reason for the disproportionate targeting of poor- and working-class Latinos for deportations is that the first step in the deportation pipeline is arrest by a police officer. The gendered and raced practices of local law enforcement thus have a spillover effect in deportation proceedings. The targets of deportation have also shaped how deportations are enacted. Authorities have long targeted marginalized communities with repressive tactics that would be unimaginable in white middle-class communities. We thus don't see or hear of ICE raids in white suburban enclaves. The police raids described in this article seem only to occur in poor and working-class communities. The enforcement of immigration law thus exacerbates existing inequities.

It is unclear at this point whether or not the number of deportations that happened during the Obama presidency will ever be surpassed. However, it is abundantly clear that the scare tactics of the Trump administration have pushed increasing numbers of immigrants into the shadows. Since Trump became President, there have been increasing reports of random street arrests in the Central Valley of California, prompting local organizers to set up a hotline to report ICE activity. One of the most salient examples happened when ICE agents apprehended four Mexican nationals in February 2018 in the small Central Valley town of Atwater, California outside a Circle K store. The ICE agents saw the four men buying coffee inside the store. The ICE agents exited first and waited for the men outside. When the men left the store, the ICE agents asked them if they had permission to be in the United States. One of the men, Miguel Botello, produced a legal permanent resident card. The agents laughed and asked him if it was fake. The other three men did not have proof of legal status in the United States. The ICE officers detained all four of the men. They let the man who had the legal permanent resident card go yet took the other three to Fresno for processing.[8] These random street arrests are not common and may be illegal as ICE agents are charged with apprehending people they have warrants for, not with racially profiling and arresting whomever they encounter. These kinds of arrests create fear in communities as people know their loved ones could be taken from them at any moment.

It is increasingly clear that neither mass deportation nor mass incarceration are improving public safety or national security, yet both are detrimental to people directly and indirectly affected. Legally innocent people experience trauma and impoverishment when a family member is incarcerated and/or

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8 http://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/local/community/atwater/article202396374.html

deported. The collateral consequences of deportation and incarceration will endure as these traumatic events will not easily be forgotten and their impacts will not easily be overcome.

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